

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



Biotechnology Notes

Volume 7 • Number 2

U.S. Department of Agriculture

February 1994

Biotechnology Notes, a compilation of agency activities, news events, and upcoming meetings, is prepared for members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Committee on Biotechnology in Agriculture (CBA) by USDA's Office of Agricultural Biotechnology (OAB).

INSIDE USDA

ANIMAL GENOME MAPPING

The National Animal Genome Research Program (NAGRP) is an organized, coordinated effort to map the genomes of cattle, poultry, sheep, and swine. The NAGRP is part of the National Genetic Resources Program authorized in the 1990 Farm Bill.

The Animal Genome Technical Committee currently consists of 51 scientists at 27 locations (Agricultural Experiment Stations, USDA-Agricultural Research Service Laboratories, and other universities.) The Technical Committee is divided into species committees. A species coordinator, selected by a competitive process, coordinates and facilitates the genome mapping research within each species. The first meeting of the Technical Committee took place in Salt Lake City, UT, Nov. 18-19, 1993. Good progress and exciting research was reported in all four species.

Genome databases, similar in design to the mouse database, are being developed for each species. The swine database, called USPIGBASE, is the first database to be developed and it is now available for use. Databases for cattle, poultry and sheep will soon be accessible by computer over the Internet system.

The next meeting of the Animal Genome Technical Committee will be in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, September 22-23, 1994. To learn more about the NAGRP, please call Richard Frahm, program leader, at 202-401-4895.

AN OVERVIEW OF BIOTECH REGULATIONS

Sally Van Wert, senior biotechnologist at USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) presented a paper on "USDA Oversight for Plants Produced Through Biotechnology" at a symposium on "Improved Crop and Plant Products Through

Biotechnology," January 16, in Keystone, CO. Van Wert discussed APHIS' permitting system including the notification and petition amendments which were added last March. She also presented an update on how many notifications have been issued, the number of permits given each year, and the number of releases for each crop and microorganism (see graph on page 7). She also speculated on the evolution of USDA's regulations of genetically modified plants and microbes. For more details, please call Van Wert at 301-436-4887; Fax: 301-436-8669.

NEWS AROUND THE NATION (AND THE WORLD)

UK SETTLES LABELING DEBATE

The United Kingdom (UK) government announced that it has accepted recommendations of a food advisory committee on the labeling criteria for genetically modified foods. The committee recommended that a modified food should be labeled if it contains a copy gene from a human, a gene from an animal which is the subject of religious dietary restrictions, or if it is a plant or microbial material and contains a gene originally derived from an animal. These rules do not apply, however, if the inserted gene has been destroyed through processing.

Labeling of products would be required to say "contains copies of 'X' gene." For single ingredient foods and foods sold loose, the previous statement would accompany the name under which the food is offered for sale. For prepackaged foods, the statement would appear with the list of ingredients.

The committee also recommended a public education campaign to increase consumer understanding about the use of genetic modification in the manufacture of foodstuffs.

NEW ELECTRONIC INFO BOARD LAUNCHED

An electronic bulletin board that focuses on biotechnology news and views has just begun. It features capsule summaries of the latest developments in agricultural biotechnology taking place domestically and around the world. Tom Zinnen at the University of Wisconsin is one of the movers and shakers behind the service. To learn how to subscribe, send an e-mail message to Zinnen@gene.biotech.wisc.edu.

WORLDWIDE DATABASE GEARING UP

IRRO, the Information Resource for the Release of Organisms to the Environment, is conducting a survey of potential users for its global information network on releases of animals, plants and microorganisms into the environment. IRRO was established in 1991 under the United Nations Environment Programme. Potential users could include policy makers, scientists, or those interested in accessing information relevant to regulatory/oversight purposes. To receive a copy of the survey, write to IRRO Secretariat, c/o MSDN, 307 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 OJX, United Kingdom; or call 44-223-276622; Fax: 44-223-277605; Internet: msdn@phx.cam.ac.uk.

CANADIAN FIELD TRIALS

Agriculture Canada approved 482 field tests in 1993 at 87 locations for genetically modified crops, according to the January/February 1994 issue of *The AgBiotech Bulletin*. Most of the trials were for canola; others involved corn, flax, potatoes, soybeans, and tobacco. The researchers were studying ways to enhance insect, disease, and herbicide resistance as well as methods to improve nutritional qualities and stress tolerance. To learn more, call Joyce Byrne at 613-992-2114.

VIDEOCONFERENCE SET FOR MAY 12

Helping county extension personnel to zero in on educational programs related to biotechnology and food is the main thrust of a videoconference that will air by satellite on May 12 from 2-4 p.m. Eastern time, 1-3 p.m. Central time, noon-2 p.m. Western time, and 11-1 p.m. Pacific time.

Called "Biotechnology and Food: A Public Issue for Extension Education," it is a product of the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the UW Biotechnology Center as well as colleagues at the University of California. For more details, send an e-mail message to: trzebiaaggie@wisplan.uwex.edu; or call 608-262-9940.

IN CASE YOU WEREN'T THERE

■ In his remarks at the National Biotechnology Summit, January 24, Charles Hamner, President of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, said "education . . . will not alone guarantee the acceptance of biotechnology, and cannot naively be extolled as an antidote to uncertainty or skepticism." He went on to share lessons learned at the Center, such as the fact that education should not try to convince people of anything. Its purpose, rather, should be to inform and stimulate dialogue. He cautioned against confusing

education with public relations and went on to stress that education has its limits, especially when it comes face to face with personal, religious, or philosophical beliefs. For more information about the North Carolina Biotechnology Center, call Steven Burke at 919-541-9366. For more details about the Summit, please call its sponsor, *Genetic Engineering News*, at 212-289-2300.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

■ "Biotechnology and Food: A Leader and Participant Guide," by Tom Zinnen and Jane Voichick. Includes seven modules to help the public learn about classical and modern applications of biotechnology to food production. To order call 608-262-3346 and ask for catalog number B3594.

■ *Harmful Non-Indigenous Species in the United States*. A report from the Office of Technology Assessment. September 1993. 400 pages. For information about ordering, send a fax to 202-512-2250; or call 202-783-3238.

■ "Problems of Communicating Genetic Engineering to the German Public." A published statement by Simone Ehmig of the Johannes Gutenberg University that was presented at a workshop in Dublin, Ireland, March 22-25, 1992.

■ "The Use of Bovine Somatotropin (BST) in the United States: Its Potential Effects." Prepared by the Office of Management and Budget. To receive a copy, call the OMB publications office at 202-395-7332.

■ *Sweetpotato Technology for the 21st Century*. Edited by W. Hill, C. Bonsi, and P. Loretan. Published by Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL. 1992.

■ "Report on the University of California Biotechnology Research and Education Program," by Susanne Huttner. To receive a copy, call 310-206-6814; Fax: 310-206-3747.

■ "The Multinational Coordinated *Arabidopsis thaliana* Genome Research Project: Progress Report for Year Three." Prepared by the National Science Foundation. 1993. For information about ordering a copy, please write to the National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA 22230.

■ Three new publications from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): "Traditional Crop Breeding Practices: An Historical Review To Serve as a Baseline for Assessing the Role of Modern Biotechnology," "Safety Considerations for Biotechnology: Scale-Up of Crop Plants," and "Field Releases of

Transgenic Plants, 1986-1989: An Analysis." For more information, please call Mark Cantley at 33-1-4524-9331; Fax: 33-1-4524-9767.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Feb. 7-11: "International Conference on Gene Mapping in Terrestrial and Aquatic Vertebrates." Oslo, Norway. For details write to the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Animal Genetics, Att. Oystein Lie, Box 8146, Dep. N-0033 Oslo, Norway.

Feb. 10-11: Southeast University/Industry Technology Transfer Conference. Orlando, FL. Co-hosted by Duke University Medical Center and the Southern Research Institute. For details call Lucy Malone at 615-366-0679; Fax: 615-366-0695.

Feb. 17: "Risk Communication." This workshop is sponsored by the Canadian Institute of Biotechnology and the National Institute of Nutrition. It will be led by Vincent Covello and takes place at the Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto, Canada. For details call Diana Gaghofer at 613-235-3355; Fax: 613-235-7032.

Feb. 18-23: The AAAS Annual Meeting: Science and A Changing World. San Francisco, CA. Call 301-855-8811; Fax: 301-855-8579.

April 20-21: Fourth New England Animal Biotechnology Symposium. Storrs, CT. For registration and abstract information call 203-486-3231 or send a fax to 203-486-5221. For information about graduate scholarships and submission of abstracts (deadline April 1), call Steve Zinn at 203-486-0861.

May 3-6: "Biotechnology Applications in Space." University Park, PA. Penn State Biotechnology Institute. For course details call Patricia Phillips at 814-863-3650; Fax: 814-863-1357.

May 18-19: Meeting of USDA's Agricultural Biotechnology Research Advisory Committee. Washington, DC. Call 703-235-4419 for more details.

May 23-24: NABC6: "Agricultural Biotechnology and the Public Good." East Lansing, MI. For details write to NABC, 159 Biotechnology Bldg., Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850-2701; or call 517-355-0123; Fax: 517-353-5406; E-mail: 18215emh@ibm.cl.msu.edu

June 4-7: 1994 Congress on Cell and Tissue Culture: "Regulation of Cell and Tissue Differentiation." Research Triangle Park, NC. For details call 410-992-0946; Fax: 410-992-0949.

June 7-11: "The Pacific Rim Biotechnology Conference." San Diego, CA. Sponsored by the International Federation for the Advancement of Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology and *Genetic Engineering News*. Call 301-652-3072; Fax: 301-652-4951 for details.

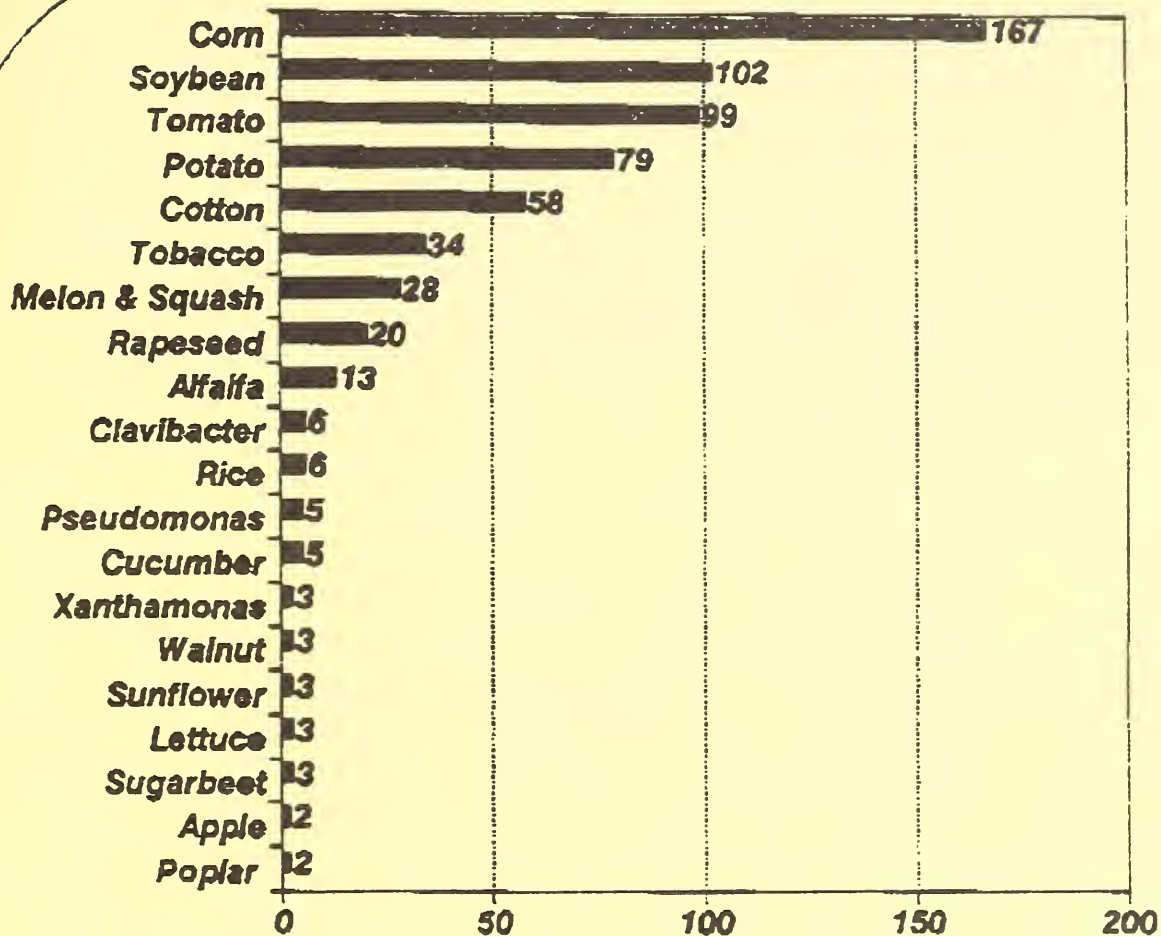
June 25-28: "Second International Weed Control Congress." Copenhagen, Denmark. Co-sponsored by the International Weed Science Society and the European Weed Research Society. For details write to ICS, International Conference Services A/S, Strandvejen 171, P.O. Box 41, DK-2900, Hellerup, Denmark.

July 3-8: "Seventh International Congress of Bacteriology and Applied Microbiology Division and the Mycology Division." Prague, Czech Republic. Sponsored by the Czechoslovak Society for Microbiology. For details write to SCS Travel Agency Ltd., IUMS Congresses '94, Boticska 4, 128 00 Prague 2, Czech Republic; or call 42 2 297 698; Fax: 42 2 299 955.

Biotechnology Notes is written by Marti Asner, public affairs specialist in USDA's Office of Agricultural Biotechnology. Any comments or suggestions may be sent to USDA/OAB, Room 1001, Rosslyn Plaza-E, 14th and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20250-2200. Phone: 703-235-4419; Fax: 703-235-4429; Internet: masner@csrs.esusda.gov.

USDA prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at 202-720-5881 (voice) or 202-720-7808 (TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, Washington, DC 20250 or call 202-720-7327 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.



**Biotechnology
Permits :
Release Permits
& Notifications**

*Type of Crops
& Organisms
FY88 - FY94 (1Qtr)*

*Number of
Permits Issued
& Notifications
Acknowledged
as of 12/31/93*

***NOTE: The following crops have been released (1) once via permit : Agrostis palustris, Allegheny Serviceberry, beets, carrots, chrysanthemum, papaya, peanut, petunia, plum, Sorbus sp, Squash/melon/tomato, and TMV.**

Graph provided courtesy of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Biotechnology, Biologics and Environmental Protection Division

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND

**"THE 1994 SECOND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE
APPLICATIONS
OF BIOTECHNOLOGY TO TREE CULTURE, PROTECTION, AND
UTILIZATION"**

**OCTOBER 2-6, 1994
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA**

TOPICS:

**TREE PROTECTION
TREE GENETICS
COMMERCIALIZATION OF TREE BIOTECHNOLOGY
TISSUE CULTURE
BIOREMEDIATION
GENE MAPPING**

SPONSORS:

**USDA'S OFFICE OF AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY
USDA'S NORTHEASTERN FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION
USDA'S NORTHCENTRAL FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION**

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:
EDITH FRANSON
TREE BIOTECHNOLOGY SYMPOSIUM
FORESTRY SCIENCES LABORATORY, POB 898
RHINELANDER, WI 54501
715-362-7474; FAX: 715-362-7816**